

Message Text

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11

ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9182
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C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 12266

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT

SUBJECT: GENERAL SUMITRO ON BURU ISLAND POLITICAL PRISONERS

1. SUMMARY: FOLLOWING A THREE DAY VISIT TO BURU ISLAND DETENTION CAMP, KOPKAMTIB CHIEF SUMITRO TOLD JOURNALISTS HE WAS IMPRESSED BY ECONOMIC PROGRESS MADE BY PRISONERS, AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT WITH POSITIVE CHANGE IN ATTITUDE THEY COULD BE RETURNED TO SOCIETY. SUMITRO WAS ACCOMPANIED ON HIS TOUR OF BURU BY ATTORNEY GENERAL ALI SAID, A GROUP OF PROMINENT EDITORS AND AN EXPERT TEAM HEADED BY PSYCHOLOGIST FUAD HASSAN WHICH IS DRAWING UP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BURU REFORM. SUMITRO'S WILLINGNESS TO EXPOSE BURU SITUATION TO PRESS, HIS POSITIVE COMMENTS ABOUT REHABILITATION OF BURU PRISONERS AND CONDITIONS THERE, AND APPOINTMENT OF EXPERTS TO RECOMMEND REFORM MEASURES ARE ENCOURAGING DEVELOPMENTS. THEY SUGGEST GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED TO COUNTER FOREIGN CRITICISM OF PRISONER POLICY WITH MORE OPEN DISCUSSION OF PROBLEM, AND THAT SERIOUS CONSIDERATION, AT LEAST, IS BEING GIVEN TO A MORE HUMANE APPROACH TO TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION OF DETAINEES. FOLLOWING BASED MAINLY ON PRESS REPORTS. END SUMMARY.

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WM SUMITRO SPENT THREE DAYS IN BURU LAST WEEK WITH A GROUP THAT INCLUDED ATTORNEY GENERAL ALI SAID AND SEVERAL PROMINENT EDITORS INCLUDING ROSIHAN ANWAR, EDITOR OF PEDOMAN, MOCHTAR LUBIS, LONG-TIME GOVERNMENT CRITIC AND EDITOR OF INDONESIA RAYA, AND FUAD HASSAN OF UNIVERSITY OF INDONESIA, WHO HEADED "EXPERT TEAM" OF SOCIAL SCIENTISTS WHICH INTERVIEWED HUNDREDS OF PRISONERS DURING LONGER STAY OF TEN DAYS. (ATTORNEY GENERAL ALI SAID TOLD AMBASSADOR GALBRAITH LAST JUNE 6 THAT THE AMBASSADOR OR A MEMBER OF THE EMBASSY STAFF MIGHT BE INVITED TO ACCOMPANY HIM ON THIS TRIP; BUT IN A SUBSEQUENT MEETING WITH EMBOFF SAID INDICATED PLANS TO INCLUDE FOREIGN DIPLOMATS HAD BEEN CANCELLED WHEN GENERAL SUMITRO DECIDED TO MAKE THE TRIP.)

3. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE AT AMBON OCTOBER 12, SUMITRO PRAISED THE BURU DETAINEES FOR PRODUCING ENOUGH RICE FOR BOTH THEIR OWN NEEDS AND FOR EXPORT TO OTHER ISLANDS IN THE MOLUCCAS. HE SAID THE VISIT HAD GIVEN HIM "CLEAR PERSPECTIVES ON HOW TO SOLVE THE WHOLE PROBLEM OF POLITICAL DETAINEES" AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT WITH "A CHANGE OF ATTITUDE THE PRISONERS COULD BE REINTEGRATED INTO SOCIETY". ACCORDING TO KOMPAS REPORT, SUMITRO SAID CONDITIONS IN BURU WERE BETTER AND FREER THAN IN ORDINARY PRISON CAMPS. HE DESCRIBED THE ENVIRONMENT AS FREE AND UNHAMPERED AND BLESSED WITH NATURAL BEAUTY AND TRANQUILITY. ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEW STANDARD, REPORTED THAT SUMITRO PRAISED THE PRISONERS FOR ERECTING "BUILDINGS OF WORSHIP FOR VARIOUS RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS" AND QUOTED HIM SAYING "ONE DAY YOU WILL BE FREE, SINCE THIS DETENTION CAMP IS NOT DESIRED TO BE PERMANENT IN NATURE."

4. IN COMMENT WITH EMBOFF AFTER HIS RETURN, FUAD HASSAN SAID HIS GROUP IS DRAWING UP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BURU REFORM WHICH WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL

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SUBMITTED TO GEN SUMITRO ON OCTOBER 20. ALTHOUGH HASSAN STREIED THAT INDONESIAN INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY STILL TAKES A VERY HARD LINE AGAINST BURU LIBERALIZATION, HE WAS AMAZED AT SUMITRO'S OWN OEPN ATTITUDE. WHILE ON THE ISALAND, SUMITRO PERSONALLY PROMISED TO SEND BOOKS, NEWSPAPERS AND WRITING MATERIALS TO SOME OF THE FAMOUS INTELLECTUAL DETAINEES. HASSAN IS HOPEFUL

THAT THIS MAY LEAD TO MORE SYSTEMATIC
ABOLITION OF TOTAL VAN AGAINST INFORMATION
DISSEMINATION WHICH STILL PREVAILS ON BURU.
HE SAID IT HAS NOT YET BEEN DECIED WHETHER
SUMITRO'S PROMISES OF "SOCIALIZATION" AND
"RELEASE" OF BURU PRISONERS AND "IMPERMANENCE" OF
DETENTION ON BURU (WHICH GOT HEAVY PRESS
COVERAGE) MEANS THAT SOME PRISONERS MIGHT
EVENTUALLY BE ALLOWED TO RETURN TO JAVA, OR
MERELY THAT DETAINEES WILL BE INTEGRATED INTO
A NEW SOCIETY OF TRANSMIGRANTS, FREE ONLY AS
LONG AS THEY STAY ON BURU. HOWEVER HE IS
CONFIDENT THAT SUMITRO (WHO FEARS THAT BURU
MAY BE A BREEDING GROUND FOR FUTURE REVOLUTIONARY
CORE GROUP) WILL ACT DECISIVELY TO IMPLEMENT
IMPROVEMENTS.
GALBRAITH

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